1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

to which people without sons go. Widowhood is the result of sins committed in a previous incarnation. Formerly, a widow's head was shaved, and she was not allowed to remarry. A married woman is regarded as an auspicious person, and articles associated with her, like flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, glass bangles, and the marriage badge (*tāli*), are regarded as sacred and worshipped on certain occasions. A widow is more or less completely excluded from ritual.

It is necessary to note that the Coorg attitude to the widow is similar to the Brahmin's, though the differentiation between married woman and widow is not as thoroughgoing as among the Brahmin. But the similarity does make possible greater Sanskritization subsequently.

A married woman is a preferred type of person among Coorgs. Motherhood is a preferred condition and formerly the mother of ten children was entitled to have *mangala* performed in her honour.

Other types of preferred persons are the strong man who is also skilled in athletic sports, dancing, and fighting, and the magician who is usually also a doctor. Frequently several preferred traits were combined in the same man, making him doubly or trebly preferred. The preference expresses itself in custom and ritual.

It might be said that the general orientation of Coorg culture is martial. Frequently, customs and rites which appear to be taken over from neighbouring cultures are given a martial twist in Coorg. Competitive games like shooting at a coconut, and fighting for the possession of a coconut, and a collective hunt are introduced into every festival.

The harvest festival and the 'festival of arms' are both very significant in this connexion. It has been pointed out that the most important rites of the harvest festival are the cutting of sheaves, the eating of new rice grains, and the expression of a wish for plenty, but around these central rites are organized dancing and singing, competitive games, and a collective hunt. The incidental elements of the festival take up ten or eleven days while the main elements do not take up more than a day.

The completion of transplantation marks the end of a very arduous period in the cultivation of rice. Thereafter both the men and the oxen are relatively free till the beginning of harvesting. The 'festival of arms' comes at the end of the field season, and at this festival a Coorg resumes his contact with his weapons which

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

he had put away at the beginning of the rainy season. The break in the continuity of the relationship between a man and, say, his gun, creates some 'awkwardness' and so the weapons are worshipped before being used. Later, a collective hunt is held.

The Kaṇiya astrologer decides what periods of time are auspicious for worshipping the weapons and for cutting branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree. He also decides when the village or *nāḍ* should have the collective hunt, in which direction the hunting party should go if they want the hunt to be successful, and, finally, the man who should lead the hunt.

The branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree are used for making barriers which are erected in the rice-fields a few weeks after the end of transplantation, in order to catch the small fish which abound in the waterlogged fields during this part of the year. These fish are regarded as a great delicacy, and catching them is a favourite sport. An improvident man is described in a proverb as one who lives on fish caught in the fields and on rice borrowed from neighbours at a ruinous rate of interest.

The weapons are cleaned and kept either in the sacred central hall or in the south-western room. They are marked with sandalwood paste. (Some Coorgs, like Brahmins on the western coast, mark their foreheads with sandalwood paste before worshipping a deity.) The weapons are worshipped with flowers, and a favourite flower used for worship on this occasion is the *tōku* which derives its name from the fact that it looks like a gun. Curried meat and cooked rice-flour are offered on plantain leaves to the weapons.

After dinner, the men put on their gowns, and assemble in the south-western room, or central hall. The head of the *okka* hands over to each his weapons and the latter salutes the former after receiving his weapons.[1] The headman says, as he stands over the weapons, 'Fight a tiger and boar by stepping aside the charging beast [i.e. avoid standing in the direct line of the charge], do not underrate your enemy, fight him face to face, stand by your friend, be obedient to the king, and do not forget God.'

The headman of the *okka* feeds the domestic dogs with cooked rice-flour. Then, just before the men of the *okka* leave the house for the village green he says, 'Let the horned deer and tusked boar cross my path.' Finally, he fires a shot in the direction of the jungle.

[1] A boy who is old enough to hunt receives his first gun on this occasion.

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

within the gate, men hold upright the stems of a plantain tree with the leaves on them. A large broad Coorg war-knife is put into his hand, and he has to cut through a plantain stem with one blow. Three chances are allowed to him. It is clear that the possession of physical strength has always been regarded as an essential requisite in a suitor, and the survival of this custom is a safeguard against the premature marriage of children which prevails elsewhere. The bride's party come to meet them there and some of their servants bring chairs and mats along with refreshments. Both parties with the united efforts of the musicians advance to the house. The bridegroom is received by his parents-in-law. After the customary salutations, refreshments of pansupari are freely sent round. Then a meal is served and enjoyed with liberal potations. The bride is conducted by her maids over an outspread cloth into the bridal chamber, where she is seated on a low stool. The bridegroom's party approach her and repeat the ceremony of rice throwing which was performed at noon by the bride's relations. At last the bridegroom who is seated on a low stool all along is conducted to the bridal chamber, and is seated by the right side of the bride who with bent heads sits veiled all over. Soon he rises and strews rice over her and gives her some milk to sip, but speaks nothing. He then presents her with a small bag containing a silver or gold ring, a gold coin for her pattakku or necklace, and some silver coins. Then both eat together for the first time, being served by some women of the household. After this wedding meal the young couple have the exchange of looks and words. The bridegroom grasps her hand and leads her out of the house, and this act of possession constitutes the essential part of the ceremony. He then returns home with his wife accompanied by his party. If the house is distant, the young wife with her maids are conveyed to a bullock cart. If it is nearer, she is conducted by her two best friends. The mother of the bridegroom or the mistress of the house welcomes and conducts her to her own room and gives her refreshments. The guests are treated to a feast after which they take leave of the host. Aruva and ten married Coorgs of their nearest kin remain behind. The members of the family along with them assemble round the sacred lamp, when the Aruva gives some homely advice about the duties and privileges of a married Coorg. Hearing this, the bridegroom grasps her right hand and goes with her towards the door, but as he steps outside, she remains within. Her relations now form two rows in front of the door, and the Aruva of the bride tells the Aruva of the bridegroom, "You have desired Puraka from us Mandanna. We have given her, and now ask you, "Has she any claim on Mandanna's property, house and yard, field and jungle, gold and silver, if she becomes his wife?" The bridegroom's Aruva says, "Puraka has a lawful claim on Mandanna's property." This is repeated thrice, and as a typical pledge of possession, like the 'patti jamma fee' on the investment with land, the bridegroom's Aruva hands over to that of the bride's family

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Coorgs in National Costume

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A Village Takka (headman)

[facing p. 50]

Festivals: (1) Huttari

243 The Huttari is the feast of first fruits. The name is said to be
746 derived from the Malayalam 'pudiyari', or new rice. It occurs at full moon
527 at the end of November or beginning of December. After various preliminary ceremonies, the person chosen to cut the first sheaves goes at sunset to the fields in procession with a lighted torch in a dish of rice
[415] carried before him. He has a sickle in one hand and a bamboo bottle of fresh milk in the other. He cuts the sheaf and distributes the stalk to those present, and puts some into the milk. This is carried in procession to the
[534] house, the people shouting, "Poli, poli, Deva", that is, "Increase, increase, O God," followed by a blast of the shrill Coorg brass horn. It is truly a national and thanksgiving feast entirely uninfluenced by Brahmanism. It
[535] lasts for seven days. It begins with village rejoicings and extends to Nad
[533] or district gatherings, and ends every day with the peculiar cane dance of
[526] the men and boys to the tune of the most melancholy and monotonous sound of horns, drums and songs. Other games vary the proceedings, but the most interesting part is always the champion fight in playful dance, which often ends in a general skirmish in which the canes are freely used.

(2) Kaylmurtha

527 The Kaylmurtha is the festival of arms celebrated by the youths and men of Coorg sometime in August. When the hard labours of ploughing, sowing, and transplanting of rice are over, a break in the monsoon spreads its bright light and sunny warmth over the hills and
[787] dales, forests and fields in Coorg, when a holiday is most welcome. The Takka of the grama calls some respectable men to accompany him to the astrologer's home. They ascertain the most propitious day for the celebration of the festival.

● [411] On the morning of the joyous day, the whole armoury of the house is placed in the verandah, gun and spear, bow and arrow, sword and knife. Some of the young men sit down to burnish the familiar weapons. When
[782] this is done, they are carried to a room or central hall, where they are placed in a corner. When the auspicious moment arrives incense is burnt before the weapons, sandal paste is dotted on them in profusion, and a show offering, *Nivedya*, is offered to them and the idols. As soon as the
[526] festival is over, the whole house sits down to dinner. The men then proceed with their arms to the village green, *uru-mandu*, to spend the afternoon in shooting at a mark and in athletic sports. The following day is devoted to a hunt in the forest belonging to the village. This is followed by a great hunt of the whole Nadu. It is a repetition of the village hunt
[533] on a larger scale. Whatever game is obtained, the man who killed the animal receives a hind quarter and the head. The rest goes to the company. The Kaylmurtha is the most glorious of all festivities to the young Coorgs,

Hunting and Fishing

The Coorgs have been skilful hunters, and still keep up their hunting habits. Their chief weapons were the gun and the big knife in addition to the small handy waist knife. They no longer use the bow and arrow, or the sling. The long matchlock gun has gone out of use, and the wealthier Coorgs are now equipped with English guns and rifles of the best kind. The big broad-bladed curved Coorg knife, *odikathi*, is a most formidable weapon in a hand-to hand fight. The bulk of them hunt partly for sport, and partly to supplement their vegetable diet. Pigs are coursed with dogs, brought to bay, and killed with spears, which are short, heavy, and broad in the blade, or with ordinary fighting spears. Old boars fight fiercely, and hunters are sometimes wounded or killed. Most animals are trapped. When they go hunting in a party, they have dogs which are set on tracking. When they bark, and the hunters approach, the animal is disturbed. It tries to run away or charges them. In the latter case they aim at the animal with guns and kill it.

In their spare moments the Coorgs fish in streams, rivers and tanks. They use nets. The ordinary one is the *thaduvala* which is spread across the stream to prevent fish from escaping. At a distance of about a furlong, they spread another net so as to drive the fish within the net. When the nets are brought closer, many fish are caught by hand. They use also another net known as *beesvala* by which they catch fish by shooting and throwing baits.

Dietary

The Coorgs have an abundant variety of food materials. They eat pigs and goats. Their chief article of food is rice, and on festive occasions cakes and sweetmeats are prepared. Earthenware vessels are used. Their kitchens are remarkable for the cleanliness of their cooking vessels in use which are in charge of the cook. Like their Hindu sisters, the Coorg women attend on elderly members before they take meals. Before serving the meals, a little of the cooked food is offered to the family deity at the Kanni-kombare. They take an early breakfast of rice seasoned with curds and pickles. A substantial meal is taken at noon with rice and curry. At 3 p.m. kanji is again taken, and in the evening a hearty meal of boiled rice with vegetable and meat curry and other condiments. Toddy tapped from the bastard sago palm, arrack and a kind of beer made of fermented rice, brandy are the usual beverages. Of late European liquors have become common beverages at festivities.

Coorg Hospitality

The Coorg women deserve much for their industry. They rise very early, clean the kitchen, and do all kinds of work. They bear the

462 brunt of the labour on the farm. The men plough the fields, transplant, and reap the rice. The women carry the manure, pluck weeds and clean [521] the paddy. The men do no menial work. They leave that to women and [276] servants, and enjoy a dignified repose chewing betel and gossiping. Some are expert tailors. Others with gun on shoulder wander through the jungle in search of game.

574 The Coorgs are noted for their hospitality and they enjoy visits from friends and relations. Should a male guest arrive, the men of the house meet him at the *kayale* and exchange greetings. The method of doing so is [576] by both sexes alike and is very charming. The salutant being always the younger, stoops down, and touches the feet of the other who rests his head on the person concerned and blesses him. Meanwhile, the cook has spread a mat or carpet on the verandah bench, where he rests after washing his feet. He is then served with a chew, and later on with a meal, after which is discussed the special business of his visit. On his return, he pays his parting salutation in the above manner to the old men and women of the house, and the young men accompany him for some distance and take leave of him in the same manner.

When a female guest arrives, the cook or any other woman of the household meets her with a vessel of water and after saluting takes the kerchief from the guest's head and conducts her into the inner hall where she is received by the women, who enter into a free and hearty flow of conversation without any formalities. On leaving the house, the guest's kerchief is returned to her and an old man of the house with one or two women accompany her some distance. These visits of women are never made without the knowledge of their husbands, and they are always accompanied by some old man or female servant.

Dress

291 The principal dress of a Coorg consists of a long coat of dark coloured cloth open in front and reaching below the knees. The sleeves end below the elbow and show the arms of a white shirt which is generally of the English pattern. This is folded across and confined at the waist by a red or blue girdle wound several times round and round, and knotted at the left front. [411] On the right front, the Coorg short knife is stuck to the girdle having an ivory or silver handle, and fastened with silver chains. The large broad-bladed waist knife (*odikathi*) is very rarely worn. Its place is at the back, where it is carried in a brass clasp with its point directed towards the left shoulder. Like the kukri of the Gurkhas, it was a formidable weapon in hand-to-hand fighting. It is now used as a test of skill and strength on festive occasions, as when a bridegroom is expected to cut through the trunk of a plantain tree at one stroke. Their head-dress is a red kerchief or the beauti-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

the whole area of the court was now beset with Soldiers,
each holding as high as his face, an immense billhook or knife, the blade of which near the extremity could not be less than three inches wide and diminishing gradually towards the hilt. This formidable instrument, well known in Indian warfare under the name of the "Coorg knife", is often used as a sword, and when handled by men, who are not afraid to close with their antagonist, is said to be a most efficient weapon.

"On a signal given by the Rajah a folding door was thrown open on one side of the court, and in stalked two immense royal tigers, held by several men on each side by long ropes, attached to collars round the animals' necks. These beasts appeared very tractable, for they allowed themselves to be led very close to us. I confess, I did not much like this degree of propinquity and eyed the slender cordage with some professional anxiety. Meanwhile the Rajah and his son and the officers of the household appeared quite unconcerned, though the tigers passed within a few yards of them, and, as it seemed to me, might easily have broken loose.

"What degree of training these animals had undergone, I know not, but after a little while, the Rajah, probably to increase the surprise of his guest, directed the men to let go the ropes and to fall back. There we sat in the midst of the open court with a couple of full sized tigers in our company, and nothing on earth to prevent their munching us all up! The well fed and well bred beasts, however, merely lounged about, rubbed their noses together and then tumbling on the ground, rolled about like a couple of kittens at play. I could, however, detect the Rajah spying at me out of the corner of his eye and half smiling at the success of his trick. After a time the men were recalled and the tigers dragged off.

"A pair of lionesses and two furious looking buffaloes were then introduced, but nothing could be more innocent or more respectful to the Rajah and his son. Like Falstaff, in-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

distinguished for bravery. Apparently anticipating the present military regulation, they shave their chin but sport mighty whiskers! The colour of the Coorgs is lighter than might be expected under this latitude. Their mode of life and pride of race impart to their whole bearing an air of manly independence and dignified self-assertion, well sustained by their peculiar and picturesque costume.

The principal Coorg dress is a long coat (kupasa) of white or blue cotton or dark coloured cloth and even velvet. It reaches below the knees, is open in front, has, if not white, short sleeves under which longer ones of a different colour extend to the waist, and is held together by a red or blue sash of cotton or silk which is several times wound round the waist and which holds the never failing Coorg knife, with ivory or silver handle and chains of the same metal. A red kerchief or the peculiarly fashioned turban, which is large and flat at the top and covers a portion of the back of the neck, forms the head-dress. The feet are bare or protected with light sandals. A necklace of the berry of Rudrákshi (Elæocarpus ganitrus), silver or gold bracelets on the wrists, and silver and gold earrings with pearls or precious stones complete their festive costume. Those who are in possession of the Coorg-medal or the lunulate ornament called Kokaládi[2] do not fail to suspend it round their neck, as may be seen on the front-illustration. Their every day dress is of course of a more simple nature. The Coorg warrior looks more imposing. His dress is of the same cut, but of coarser material and shorter. In addition to his handy waist-knife (Picha-katti), he wears on his back in a strong clasp of brass the curved, broad-bladed Coorg knife (Odu-katti) which is seen in the hand of the figure in our illustration. In a hand-to-hand fight it was a most formidable weapon and since the young Coorgs have no longer Mussulman or Nair antagonists to decapitate, they display at their feasts the strength of their

[1] [Errata: This should read "wrist". See Corrigenda, Cat. 116; P. 493 -- Analyst]

[2] [Errata: This should read "Kokadádi." -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

arms and the sharp edge of their knives by beheading pigs or cutting at a blow through the trunk of thick plantain trees. The long matchlock gun is now more a weapon of curiosity than of practical use, except with the poorer Coorgs, the wealthier sportsmen having supplied themselves with English rifles of the best description. Their ancient arms and ornaments were manufactured with the most simple tools by natives of Coorg.

The Coorg Rajahs used to reward men distinguished for personal bravery with silver and gold bangles, or with an ornamented large knife bearing the Rajah's stamp ಌ upon the blade and these tokens are kept as sacred heirlooms and worn on grand occasions only.

The personal appearance of the Coorg women is not less striking than that of the men. They are remarkably fair, of goodly stature, well shaped and many are really handsome before the betel-chewing, which generally begins after marriage, disfigures their regular features. and blackens their otherwise brilliant teeth. Their festive costume—and the ordinary dress differs only in quality—is one of the most becoming that can be seen in India. A white or light blue cotton jacket with long sleeves fits tight and is closed up to the neck. A long piece of white muslin or blue cotton stuff forms the skirt, being several times wrapped round the waist and tied by means of a string, so as to make the skirt fall in graceful folds almost down to the ancles whilst one end of it covers the bosom and is knotted together on the right shoulder. To give fulness to the skirt the other end is arranged in folds, which, contrary to the fashion of other Hindu women are gathered behind, a sensible arrangement and most convenient for unobstructed activity in house and field. This peculiarity did not escape the notice of the prying Brahmins who of course accounted for it by a silly Puránic legend, which at

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A Coorgman armed.

Photogr by the Rev. G Richter Lith. by B. Kaufmann, Lahr.

[facing p. 136]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

accompany him to the house of the astrologer. They enquire of the wise man, what will be the most propitious day for the celebration of the Keilmúrta. By the sage's answer the day of joy for the village-youth is fixed. The hard labours of ploughing, sowing and rice-transplanting are over, there is a lull in the monsoon, and now and then a most lovely day spreads its bright light and sunny warmth over the hills and valleys, forests and fields of Coorg. The people have long been at labour in their fields and houses: a holiday is now most welcome. On the morning of the joyous day, the whole armoury of the house is collected in the verandah, gun and spear, bow and arrow, sword and knife. Some of the young men sit down to burnish the familiar weapons. When this is done, they are carried to some room or to the centre-place, the Nadumane, and there placed in a corner. They wait now for the muhúrta, the propitious time, assigned by the astrologer. At the right moment incense is burned before the weapons, sandalwood-paste is dotted upon them in profusion, and a show-offering of rice and other food (nevédya) is made to them, as to idols. As soon as this ceremony is over, a mat is placed before the weapons, and the whole house sits down to dinner. After the meal, the men take their arms and proceed to the Urumandu (village-green) to spend the afternoon in shooting at a mark, and in athletic exercises. When the cocoanut has been hit, some of the company jump over a rope extended four or five feet from the ground. After this exercise, plantain-trees are fixed upon the ground, standing three deep. Now the strength of arms and the goodness of knives are tried. He who succeeds in cutting through three plantain-trees at one stroke, carries away the palm. Then round, heavy stones, placed on the Mandu for the purpose, are lifted and thrown, or put as in Scotland, over the head by such as are strong enough. The evening has now set in, and the company disperses. On the following morn-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

slaughter, game without distinction or number being killed on these occasions. He is a good marksman, uses his spear with dexterity, is an excellent mahout and skilful rider; it is difficult to say, whether he takes an active personal share in the administration of his affairs—I am led to think not—nor is it easy to state what are his usual occupations or the ordinary distribution of his time, when not exposed to public view; much of it, however, is devoted to frivolous and childish pursuits.

"Lingarája is now in his forty-fourth year, about the middle size and actively formed, but in no way remarkable for any particular symmetry of features; he is rather dark complexioned and the general expression of his countenance is not disagreeable, though not indicating the habit of peremptory authority and acknowledged command; he is plain in his dress, being usually habited in a loose gown, reaching to his ancles; to this is added a black silk cape, and a cap of similar materials substitutes the place of a turban; on great occasions, however, this simplicity of dress gives way to the splendour of an English general's uniform; a string of pearls to which some jewels are affixed suspended round his neck forms the only ornament of his person, a Codagu sword is always placed on the table before him (it appears one of the ensigns of his authority) or carried with him, when he moves.

"The forms of his court exhibit but little pagentry, presenting nothing of that cumbrous and barbaric pomp in which Native Princes of whatsoever rank so much delight; indeed it is remarkable that he seems always surrounded by menials rather than men of rank. There is, however, an appearance of permanent regularity and economy, the reverse of that gorgeous improvidence for which they are remarkable. About 90 elephants and half as many horses together with some troops of dancing girls—without which Hindu greatness would be incomplete—serve to maintain the rustic splendour